General Assembly

Distr.: General
12 February 2014

Sixty-eighth session
Agenda item 19 (*h*)

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 2013

[*on the report of the Second Committee (A/68/438/Add.8)*]

68/216. Harmony with Nature

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,[1] Agenda 21,[2] the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21,[3] the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development[4] and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation),[5]

Recalling its resolutions 64/196 of 21 December 2009, 65/164 of 20 December 2010, 66/204 of 22 December 2011 and 67/214 of 21 December 2012 on Harmony with Nature and its resolution 63/278 of 22 April 2009, by which it designated 22 April as International Mother Earth Day,

Recalling also the 1982 World Charter for Nature,[6]

Noting the interactive dialogue of the General Assembly on Harmony with Nature, held on 22 April 2013, to commemorate International Mother Earth Day by discussing different economic approaches, in the context of sustainable development, to further a more ethical basis for the relationship between humanity and the Earth,

Noting also the first Peoples' World Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, hosted by the Plurinational State of Bolivia in Cochabamba from 20 to 22 April 2010,[7]

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[1] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3–14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex I.

[2] Ibid., annex II.

[3] Resolution S-19/2, annex.

[4] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August–4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[5] Ibid., resolution 2, annex.

[6] Resolution 37/7, annex.

[7] A/64/777, annexes I and II.

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Recognizing that a number of countries consider Mother Earth the source of all life and nourishment, and that these countries consider Mother Earth and humankind an indivisible, living community of interrelated and interdependent beings,

Recalling the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012, entitled "The future we want",[8]

Expressing concern about documented environmental degradation, potentially more frequent and intense natural disasters and the negative impact on nature resulting from human activity, and recognizing the need to strengthen scientific knowledge on the effects of human activities on the Earth ecosystems, with the aim of promoting and ensuring an equitable, balanced and sustainable relationship with the Earth,

Recognizing that gross domestic product was not designed as an indicator for measuring environmental degradation resulting from human activity and the need to overcome this limitation with regard to sustainable development and the work carried out in this regard,

Recognizing also the uneven availability of basic statistical data under the three dimensions of sustainable development and the need to improve their quality and quantity,

Reaffirming that fundamental changes in the way societies produce and consume are indispensable for achieving global sustainable development and that all countries should promote sustainable consumption and production patterns, with the developed countries taking the lead and with all countries benefiting from the process, taking into account the Rio principles,

Recognizing that many ancient civilizations, indigenous peoples and indigenous cultures have a rich history of understanding the symbiotic connection between human beings and nature that fosters a mutually beneficial relationship,

Recognizing also the work undertaken by civil society, academia and scientists in regard to signalling the precariousness of life on Earth, as well as their efforts, along with those of Governments and private sector organizations, to devise more sustainable models and methods for production and consumption,

Considering that sustainable development is a holistic concept that requires the strengthening of interdisciplinary linkages in the different branches of knowledge,

1. *Takes note* of the fourth report of the Secretary-General on Harmony with Nature;[9]

2. *Invites* Member States to consider existing studies and reports on Harmony with Nature, including the follow-up to the discussions at the interactive dialogues of the General Assembly, such as the dialogue held on 22 April 2013 on different economic approaches, in the context of sustainable development, in order to further a more ethical basis of the relationship between humanity and the Earth, and to promote further studies on this subject;

[8] Resolution 66/288, annex.

[9] A/68/325 and Corr.1.

3. *Requests* the President of the General Assembly to hold a regular, inclusive and interactive dialogue, at the sixty-eighth session of the Assembly, to be held at the plenary meetings to be convened during the commemoration of International Mother Earth Day on 22 April 2014, with the participation of Member States, United Nations organizations, independent experts and other stakeholders, to advance discussions on Harmony with Nature in order to promote a balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development;

4. *Encourages* giving appropriate consideration to the issue of Harmony with Nature in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda;

5. *Recalls* its resolutions requesting the Secretary-General to establish a trust fund for the participation of independent experts in the interactive dialogue to be held at the plenary meetings to be convened during the commemoration of International Mother Earth Day, and in this regard invites Member States and other relevant stakeholders to consider contributing to this trust fund once it is established;

6. *Also recalls* the launching of the Harmony with Nature website on the occasion of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development by the secretariat of the Conference and the Division for Sustainable Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, and requests the Secretary-General to continue to make use of the existing website maintained by the Division by gathering information and contributions on ideas and activities to promote a holistic approach to sustainable development in harmony with nature being undertaken to advance the integration of scientific interdisciplinary work, including success stories on the use of traditional knowledge and on existing national legislation;

7. *Recognizes* that planet Earth and its ecosystems are our home and that "Mother Earth" is a common expression in a number of countries and regions, and that some countries recognize the rights of nature in the context of the promotion of sustainable development and are convinced that, in order to achieve a just balance among the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations, it is necessary to promote harmony with nature;

8. *Calls for* holistic and integrated approaches to sustainable development that will guide humanity to live in harmony with nature and lead to efforts to restore the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystems;

9. *Invites* States:

(a) To further build up a knowledge network in order to advance a holistic conceptualization to identify different economic approaches that reflect the drivers and values of living in harmony with nature, relying on current scientific information to achieve sustainable development, and to facilitate the support and recognition of the fundamental interconnections between humanity and nature;

(b) To promote harmony with the Earth, as found in indigenous cultures, and learn from them, and to provide support for and promote efforts being made from the national level down to the local community level to reflect the protection of nature;

10. *Encourages* all countries and the relevant bodies of the United Nations system to develop and strengthen the quality and quantity of basic statistical data on the three dimensions of sustainable development, and invites the international

community and the pertinent bodies of the United Nations system to assist the efforts of developing countries by providing capacity-building and technical support;

11. *Recognizes* the need for broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product in order to better inform policy decisions, and in this regard welcomes the launching by the Statistical Commission of a work programme to develop broader measures of progress,[10] which, based on a stocktaking exercise of current national, regional and international practices to measure progress, will conduct a technical review of existing efforts in this area, with a view to identifying best practices, and to facilitating the sharing of knowledge, especially for the benefit of developing countries;

12. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution;

13. *Decides* to continue the consideration of the sub-item entitled "Harmony with Nature" at its sixty-ninth session under the item entitled "Sustainable development".

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[10] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2013, Supplement No. 4* (E/2013/24), chap. I, sect. C, decision 44/114.

General Assembly

Distr.: General
12 February 2014

Sixty-eighth session
Agenda item 19 (*i*)

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 2013

[*on the report of the Second Committee (A/68/438/Add.9)*]

68/217. Sustainable mountain development

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 55/189 of 20 December 2000, 57/245 of 20 December 2002, 58/216 of 23 December 2003, 59/238 of 22 December 2004, 60/198 of 22 December 2005, 62/196 of 19 December 2007, 64/205 of 21 December 2009 and 66/205 of 22 December 2011,

Reaffirming chapter 13 of Agenda 21[1] and all relevant paragraphs of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation),[2] in particular paragraph 42 thereof, as the overall policy frameworks for sustainable development in mountain regions,

Reaffirming also the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want",[3]

Recognizing that the benefits derived from mountain regions are essential for sustainable development and that mountain ecosystems play a crucial role in providing water resources to a large portion of the world's population,

Recognizing also that fragile mountain ecosystems are particularly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change, deforestation and forest degradation, land use change, land degradation and natural disasters, and that mountain glaciers around the world are retreating and getting thinner, with increasing impacts on the environment and human well-being,

Acknowledging that, despite the progress that has been made in promoting sustainable development of mountain regions and conservation of mountain

[1] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3–14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.

[2] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August–4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.

[3] Resolution 66/288, annex.

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ecosystems, including their biodiversity, poverty, food insecurity, social exclusion and environmental degradation are still high, and access to safe and affordable drinking water and basic sanitation as well as to sustainable modern energy services continues to be limited,

Noting the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions ("Mountain Partnership"), launched during the World Summit on Sustainable Development, with benefits from the committed support of 52 countries, one intergovernmental organization and 15 organizations from major groups, as an important multi-stakeholder approach to addressing the various interrelated dimensions of sustainable development in mountain regions,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General;[4]

2. *Encourages* States to adopt a long-term vision and holistic approaches, including through incorporating mountain-specific policies into national sustainable development strategies, which could include, inter alia, poverty reduction plans and programmes for mountain areas, as appropriate;

3. *Encourages* greater efforts by States, all stakeholders and the international community towards the conservation of mountain ecosystems and the enhancement of the well-being of their local populations, taking into account the extent of the current challenges they face and bearing in mind the increased economic, social and environmental costs that inaction might represent for countries and societies;

4. *Expresses its deep concern* at the number and scale of natural disasters and their increasing impact in recent years, which have resulted in massive loss of life and long-term negative social, economic and environmental consequences for societies throughout the world, recognizing the special vulnerability of people living in usually remote mountain environments, especially those in developing countries, and encourages the international community to take further steps to support national and regional efforts to ensure the sustainable development of mountains;

5. *Stresses* the special vulnerability of people living in usually remote mountain environments, often with limited access to health, education and economic systems and particularly at risk because of the negative impact of extreme natural phenomena, and invites States to strengthen cooperative action, with the effective involvement and sharing of experience of all relevant stakeholders, by strengthening existing arrangements, agreements and centres of excellence for sustainable mountain development, as well as exploring new arrangements and agreements, as appropriate;

6. *Encourages* States to develop and improve disaster risk management and resilience strategies in mountain regions, including a forward-looking perspective, to cope with such extreme events as rockfalls, avalanches, glacial lake outburst floods and landslides, which can be exacerbated by climate change and deforestation;

7. *Recognizes* that mountains provide sensitive indications of climate change through phenomena such as modifications of biological diversity, the retreat of mountain glaciers and changes in seasonal runoff that are having an impact on major sources of freshwater in the world, and stresses the need to undertake actions

[4] A/68/307.

to minimize the negative effects of these phenomena and promote adaptation measures;

8. *Underlines* the fact that action at the national level is a key factor in achieving progress in sustainable mountain development, welcomes its steady increase in recent years with a multitude of events, activities and initiatives, and invites the international community to support the efforts of developing countries to develop and implement strategies and programmes, including, where required, enabling policies and laws for the sustainable development of mountains, within the framework of national sustainable development plans;

9. *Encourages* the increased involvement of local authorities, as well as other relevant stakeholders, in particular the rural population, indigenous peoples, civil society and the private sector, in the development and implementation of programmes, land-use planning and land tenure arrangements, and in activities related to sustainable development in mountains;

10. *Underlines* the need for improved access to resources, including land, for women in mountain regions, as well as the need to strengthen the role of women in mountain regions in decision-making processes that affect their communities, cultures and environments, and encourages Governments and intergovernmental organizations to integrate the gender dimension, including gender-disaggregated data, in mountain development activities, programmes and projects;

11. *Encourages* the further undertaking of multi-stakeholder and transboundary initiatives at the national and regional levels, where appropriate, such as those supported by all relevant international and regional organizations, to enhance sustainable development in mountain regions;

12. *Stresses* that indigenous peoples' traditions and knowledge, including in the field of medicine, are to be fully considered, respected and promoted in development policy, strategies and programmes in mountain regions, and underlines the need to promote the full participation and involvement of mountain communities in decisions that affect them and to integrate indigenous knowledge, heritage and values in all development initiatives;

13. *Notes* decision X/30 of 29 October 2010, entitled "Mountain biological diversity", adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its tenth meeting,[5] in which the parties noted with appreciation the progress made by the Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment and invited parties, other Governments and stakeholders to take specific actions for the conservation, sustainable use and benefit-sharing of mountain biological diversity;

14. *Welcomes* the growing contribution of sustainable tourism initiatives in mountain regions as a way to enhance environmental protection and socioeconomic benefits to local communities, and the fact that consumer demand is increasingly moving towards responsible and sustainable tourism;

15. *Notes* that public awareness needs to be raised with respect to the positive and unaccounted economic benefits that mountains provide not only to highland communities but also to a large portion of the world's population living in lowland areas, and underlines the importance of enhancing the sustainability of ecosystems that provide essential resources and services for human well-being and

[5] UNEP/CBD/COP/10/27, annex.

economic activity and of developing innovative means of financing for their protection;

16. *Encourages* Member States to increase efforts to address poverty, food security and nutrition, social exclusion and environmental degradation in mountain areas, so as to improve the livelihood of the local communities and the sustainable use of mountain resources;

17. *Also encourages* Member States to collect at the local, national and regional level, as appropriate, disaggregated scientific data on mountain areas through systematic monitoring, including of trends of progress and change, based on relevant criteria, to support interdisciplinary research programmes and projects and to enhance an integrated and inclusive approach to decision-making and planning;

18. *Encourages* all relevant entities of the United Nations system, within their respective mandates, to further enhance their constructive efforts to strengthen inter-agency collaboration to achieve more effective implementation of the relevant chapters of Agenda 21,[1] including chapter 13, and paragraph 42 and other relevant paragraphs of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation,[2] and the relevant paragraphs of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want",[3] taking into account the need for the further involvement of the United Nations system, in particular the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations University, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund, as well as international financial institutions and other relevant international organizations;

19. *Recognizes* that mountain ranges are usually shared among several countries, and in this context encourages transboundary cooperation approaches where the States concerned agree to the sustainable development of mountain ranges and information-sharing in this regard;

20. *Notes with appreciation*, in this context, the Convention on the Protection of the Alps (Alpine Convention), as well as the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians, which promote constructive new approaches to the integrated, sustainable development of the Alps and the Carpathians and provide a forum for dialogue among stakeholders;

21. *Encourages* States and all stakeholders to give appropriate consideration to the issues of sustainable mountain development in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda;

22. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its seventy-first session on the implementation of the present resolution under the sub item entitled "Sustainable mountain development" of the item entitled "Sustainable development".

71st plenary meeting
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